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ABSTRACT

To provide some understanding of current reading methodology, this paper traces the history of reading instruction from ancient times to pre-Revolutionary America and examines the influences exerted upon that instruction by religion. The major portion of the paper discusses the cultures, religions, and educational systems of ancient Egypt; Mesopotamia; the Roman Empire; medieval, renaissance, and reformation Europe; England; and Colonial America. The paper concludes that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to separate the religious influences from American reading instruction, since religion has greatly influenced reading materials and instructional methodology, as well as provided the impetus for many people to learn to read. (FL)

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AMERICAN READING INSTRUCTION: PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

by

Douglas Ray Reutzel

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of American reading instruction is a colorful story shot through with flashes of changing political structures, economic conditions, and religious movements. The fascination surrounding the history of reading instruction is enhanced by the fact that the reading process is unique to mankind. Furthermore, man's desire to record and preserve a history of events and knowledge adds another unique element to this fascinating history. The Bible, one ancient religious record, has perhaps influenced reading instruction immeasurably. It is from this ancient record that various religious groups drew inspiration to learn to read and thereby understand the word of God for themselves. It came to be that religion not only influenced what was to be read, but also how reading was taught. An understanding of religious influences prior to the United States Revolutionary War upon American reading instruction is essential in order to fully appreciate contemporary reading practices.

Background

Smith (1965) stated that reading instruction began with the use of gestures, hand signals, and sign language. Primitive man used his hands to communicate concrete events and

objects symbolically. Pursuant to gestures came the development of crude writing instruments used to etch in rock unrefined pictures which illustrated the story to be told. The most primitive pictures represented only singular objects. Later these pictures evolved into something termed pictographs, which depicted a series of events. Subsequent pictographs not only illustrated events but attempted to represent abstract ideas and emotions. Through this process, man began to verbalize, using a series of unrelated grunting sounds. More and more sounds were used among humans until a real need developed "to select from the big and confused mass of ideograms, phonograms, and all their kin, a certain number of signs to denote, unvaryingly, certain sounds," as so adequately stated by Edward Clodd (1900) in his The Story of the Alphabet. Over a long period of time (no one knows how long), and through a gradual process, man developed symbols to represent certain sounds. As time progressed these symbols were grouped together to form syllables and finally complete words.

The development of the reading process as described is at best tenuous and will remain so due to the lack of supportive empirical and historical evidence. However, this description is the best possible based upon the theory and sparse historical evidence available to date.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be investigated in this report is the

pre-U.S. Revolutionary War religious influences upon American reading pedagogy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this report is to examine religious influences upon American reading instruction prior to the United States Revolutionary War.

Limitations

This writer will not generate empirical evidence to support conclusions drawn in this report, but rather encourages the reader to consider such conclusions tenable. Also, due to the immense historical time periods dealt with, only an extremely superficial survey of historical events can be presented.

Definitions

Religion. This term refers to any system of faith or worship built around God, gods, moral value systems, ethics, or philosophies.

Reading instruction. This refers to the act of relating a process by which persons are able to decode symbols into sounds and units of understanding which are associated with concepts stored in one's experiential background.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to examine influences of religion upon American reading instruction prior to the United States Revolution. In order to understand current reading methodology, one must reach into the distant past. It is here among ancient cultures, religions, and educational systems one first becomes acquainted with reading instruction's "roots."

Egypt

One of the oldest civilizations (Easton, 1955) to influence contemporary reading practices was ancient Egypt. This was a society in which the arts, religion, writing, and mathematics were inseparable. Education was primarily in the hands of rival priests, who protected and carefully dispensed knowledge to the very elite classes. Most priests were associated with a particular temple built for worshipping one specific god. Perhaps mention should be made of one of the most ancient religious books, the "Book of the Dead." This book supposedly contained great knowledge and was highly prized by the priests. However, this book turned out to be a mere collection of spells, incantations, and information by

which one could cheat Osiris, the god of the netherworld. This book was a clue to the extremely superstitious nature of the Egyptian religion. It is from these ancient Egyptian religious records that knowledge concerning ancient reading materials has been extracted.

History points out the fact that the Egyptians did not invent writing; this honor rests with the Summerians. However, the Egyptians developed a distinctive form of writing known as hieroglyphics. These were sacred carvings with simplified forms known as hieratic and demotic. This writing system adopted a syllabic system based upon sounds utilizing the rebus principle. It seems probable that this picture writing was borrowed from the Mesopotamians. The Egyptians never developed this system far enough to frame an alphabet. Vowels seemed to have posed the major problem to the development of an Egyptian alphabet. The Egyptians did, however, invent superior writing materials, except for the clay tablets of the Mesopotamians. Writing materials used were papyrus made from reeds found near the Nile, inks produced from various gums, and reeds fashioned into pens.

Religion directed not only the knowledge disseminated to the Egyptian civilization but also who could partake of this knowledge. Reading and writing were peculiar to the aristocracy, upper classes, priests, and scribes. However, one must acknowledge the contribution made by the Egyptians toward the eventual formulation of an alphabet and better

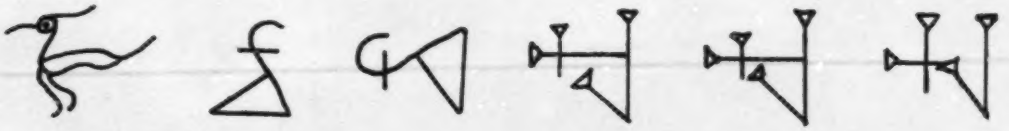
writing materials which have directly or indirectly influenced contemporary reading materials, content, and practices.

Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia, which means "between the rivers," is given the honor of having developed what could be called the first alphabet (Easton, 1955). The Mesopotamian empire was constantly troubled. One prosperous city-state would fall followed by the upsurgence of another. The entire empire was continually in a volatile state verging on an imminent collapse. This fact seemed to influence religious views. Man was seen as the lowest creature in the universe. The king was God's representative on earth, but nevertheless was not above reproach. Different from Egyptian culture and religion, the priests were not considered higher authorities on God's will than the king. Priests were appointed by the king, not visa versa. The earthly servant or attendant to the gods was called the ensi. The ensi was not superior to the king but served as an envoy between the gods and the lugal or king. This particular civilization was not concerned with universal education. Education was reserved for priests, scribes, and royalty. Massive libraries were established and maintained by scribes. The Mesopotamian empire was divided into several sub-cultures centering around a specific city-state.

The Summerians developed an ancient and crude form of writing called cuniform. Later kingdoms refined this process

into a series of wedges forming alphabetical representations:



Summerian Babylonian Assyrian

The Babylonian and Assyrian cultures were responsible for refining cuniform. However, compared to these previous cultures, the Phoenicians did more to complete the refining process which eventually lead to the first acceptable alphabet.

In summary, it seems justifiable to assert that these fragments of the Mesopotamian empire did more to move reading education forward through development of an alphabet than any of the previous cultures.

Greece

The birthplace of such greats as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, Greece, more than any other culture, made giant efforts to educate its citizenry. Education, however, even in Greece was restricted to the elite classes. Greek civilization rose around the year 1400 B.C. when the Achaeans conquered Crete. This civilization flourished until the year 359 B.C. when Philip II became king of Macedon. Two cities, Athens and Sparta, played major roles during the expansion and decline of Greece. The Greeks were generally considered to be the founders of secularism. This is not to say the Greeks had not any religion, quite to the contrary.

The Greeks did not believe in one god but rather many gods. As with other polytheistic peoples, the gods represented specific powers. Greek culture and activity were suffused by this religion until late in the Hellenic age. Great sophists such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle questioned the received beliefs of any people. These philosophers attempted to define and implement a new ethics or religious system.

Greek religion was "man" centered. This is evidenced in the statement, "Man is the measure of all things," (Easton, 1955). Religion translated into philosophy due to the Greeks questioning the divinity of the gods and views of mankind's origin. Since man was so very important, education was given especial consideration. The standard education of the Athenian boy consisted of reading, writing, and practical mathematics. Along with music and physical activities, the development of mind and body was considered to be complete with this curriculum. The development of the Greek alphabet was the primary contribution to the instruction of reading. Materials for reading instruction made little change during Greek civilization. Clay and stone tablets were still used to record important events. Some crude forms of paper were also used, resembling the Egyptian's papyrus. The Greeks brought education out of the hands of a few scribes and priests and put education within the reach of a wider range of persons. With the Greek alphabet, most sounds, words,

and thoughts were systematically and consistently represented.

The Roman Empire

Rome was founded around 753 B.C. and flourished into the year 476 A.D. in which Rome fell. The scope of Roman history and culture could fill many volumes. Rome did, however, begin with a representative form of government (a republic) and ended with the reign of a succession of emperors.

The Romans were very hospitable toward the importation of religious thought. Therefore, a variety of cultures influenced early Roman religion. Early Roman religion was not concerned with morality and ethics. All nature was regarded as animate by the Romans; and names were given to the spirits, particular areas, rivers, and various agricultural functions. Religion during later stages of Roman civilization was heavily influenced by Christianity. Most of the later Roman emperors were Christians who gradually enforced Christianity as the state religion.

Roman education was also inclined to adopt, borrow, and adapt educational practices from a variety of other cultures. Perhaps the Greeks had the most profound influence on the nature and direction of Roman education. The Romans developed their own Latin alphabet. Many of the Greek classics were translated into Latin. Quintillian, a great Roman educator, first spoke of wooden tablets used to teach

children the alphabet. All evidence indicates that these ancient clay tablets, tiles, wooden blocks, and scrolls were indeed the first readers prepared for children. During the period of Christian expansion within the Roman Empire came the appearance of a crude hornbook (Tuer, 1896), which will be discussed in later sections of this study.

Religion, especially Christianity, began and would continue to exert great influence on reading education for centuries. Furthermore, the Roman government did little to advance reading instruction a great deal beyond the accomplishments of the Greeks. The Christian church, working within the Roman Empire, had and would continue to advance reading instruction for many years to come.

The Expansion of Christianity--
The Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation

For a period of nearly 1,000 years, massive reconstruction and revolution spread across the European continent. These upheavals altered geographical, social, economic, and most notably religious certainties. Different from earlier civilization, which tended to grow steadily larger geographically, the Middle Ages brought about a multitude of geographically smaller successor states. These smaller kingdoms were ruled over by feudal lords.

During this same period the Pope of the Christian church established absolute power over Rome. The Pope extended his influence into secular as well as religious affairs reaching

far beyond the borders of Rome proper. Most feudal lords as well as kings of European nations paid tribute to the Roman church. The church was not content with preaching the gospel, but rather felt compelled to impose the glad tidings upon other cultures. As evidence of this, one points to the Christian crusades in the middle eastern civilizations.

Tremendous changes in the economic and social structures during this era forced a new symbiotic relationship between the emerging merchant middle class and the feudal lords. The invention of the printing press in 1456 by John Gutenburg also caused universal availability of printed matter which formerly had been the sole possession of the priests to the near exclusion of all others. The Bible was printed only in Latin, the language of the priests and learned classes. Martin Luther was the first to successfully counter the power and influence of the Roman Church. Luther translated the Latin Bible into the German language, the vernacular, which increased the availability of religious knowledge to the commoner.

Even though the Roman church and also the reformed churches forfeited a good deal of civil power to emerging nation states, the churches maintained almost exclusive control over elementary education, which carried near total responsibility for reading instruction. Many smaller religious sects rose and fell during the Reformation, leaving distinct marks not only on the materials and methods of reading instruction,

but also the content of reading instruction.

As one searches educational history, and more specifically reading educational history, for materials and methods, one's search inevitably leads to the so-called hornbook. Hornbooks (Smith, 1965) were constructed of various materials such as wood, iron, pewter, ivory, silver, and in some cases gingerbread. Basedow, a German educator during this era, was impressed by the "gingerbread" method of reading instruction. Gingerbread was a highly prized food, and mention should be made of its relative worth. Such would have been a tremendous motivation for lower class children to learn to read. Basedow eventually advocated the hiring of a "gingerbread" baker for every school to bake gingerbread letters for the instruction of reading. Early hornbooks contained only the alphabet. The contents of the hornbook were later expanded to contain not only the alphabet but also common syllables as well as religious selections. From this point the religious entries were expanded and collected into the first primers.

Religion also influenced the method of instruction. Man was seen as a fallen creature, evil by nature. Ostensibly, religious selections in reading instructional material were present to counteract man's evil nature. Children would learn to read even if the devil had to be beat out of the child and reading ability beat in.

Another type of primer arose; the ABC, which was

supposed to have met the needs of reading instruction rather than religious instruction. Tuer (1896) briefly summed up the purpose of the ABC in the following:

> They were to be the first books placed in the hands of the child and to contain all that it was necessary for him to know, to enable him to understand the rudiments of the Christian Religion and to join in the services of the Church and even to serve at Mass, or, as it is called, "to help a priest sing."

Religion played an increasingly important role in reading instruction during the Middle Ages and Reformation. Later this influence would be fought against by those seeking religious freedom.

During the 1600's, men sought to learn, not only for the sake of reading the scriptures, but also to be able to read and sing the Psalms and recite Cathecism (Black, Lottich, & Seckinger, 1972). For this purpose schools were established primarily for reading instruction. Reading was always the principal study followed by singing and memorizing selected religious texts. The reading instructional process was purely imitative and mechanical resulting in boredom and a distaste for reading. Children were drilled in recognition and memorization by taking each letter of the words and becoming acquainted with both letters and words. In this way, the child gradually learned to read. The method of instruction produced mechanical readers whose reading was without grace or expression. The schools and consequently the educational process were dominated by the church during the 1600's and to a large extent during the ensuing century.

Children were kept in order by the use of cruel punishments and stern severity which seemed to be the order of the day. The punishments meted out by teachers exceeded those of a prison. Such was the state of religious influence upon the reading instructional process.

England

King Henry VIII had broken relations with the church in Rome and had sought to establish the church under his guidance, which had far-reaching effects in England. Great efforts were undertaken to impose the newly established state church and its accompanying doctrinal perspectives on the people of England. England was reeling under the pressure of her own reformation. The tutor kings made token efforts to provide public schooling. This was truly a sham for only the wealthy could afford such so-called public schooling for their children. It is difficult to discuss the history of American reading instruction without examining the English schooling system for this is the model followed in America's early colonial history. Such an examination of the English schooling process inevitably leads one to the doors of the English Grammar School. Foster Watson described the English Grammar School as it was in 1660 and the attending religious emphasis as follows:

> The whole school round of religious observances, Catechisms, primers, and Bible-reading shows the permeation of the school work with religious instruction. The ecclesiastical organization of the school in the Middle Ages had prepared the ground for a theological discipline in

> the seventeenth century. The old objective influences of a picturesque ceremonial religion gave way to a subjective Biblical atmosphere, and the school was continuously cast in a religious mould. . .
>
> The Bible was the center of family religious life, known by all members of the family, read aloud morning and evening at family prayers, the sign and seal of the profession of religion, in a religious age. Family and school education were at one, in recognition of the importance of religion. (Watson, 1908)

Another stark example of religious influence on education, which underlay the motivation of schools per se, was related by Charles A. Hoole (1912) in the Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching:

> Now because all our teaching is but mere trifling unless withal we be careful to instruct children in the grounds of true religion, let them be sure to get the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.

From the comments of these two authors, it is not too difficult to distinguish whether religion influenced reading instructional practices and materials or not. Hoole also describes, less than colorfully, the materials constituting the course of reading instruction in England. Hoole states that the materials constituting the reading curriculum were the ABC, the Primer, the Psalter, and the Bible. Such materials were not only used for reading instruction but also for spelling and writing instruction.

Since American schools and consequently American reading pedagogical practices descend to us from our English ancestors, it is historically important to learn of English schools, methodologies, and instructional materials. Direct links between English and colonial reading instructional practices can be readily established by reviewing a December 24,

1744, edition of the "New York Weekly Post-Boy." The following was recorded:

> Just imported from London, and to be Sold by the Printer hereof, Bibles of several sorts, Testaments, Psalters and Primers.

Having established the use of English reading materials and practices in American colonial schools, logically a discussion of colonial schools, methodologies, and materials should follow. Also, religion's influence upon reading instructional practices in England seems justifiably established.

In summary, one must pause once again in thought to ponder about the direction reading instruction would have taken had religion not been such an important force behind not only the development of reading materials, but also the desire of many to learn to read.

Colonial America

The tentacles of religion seemed to not only encompass reading educational practices but also the conception of American colonization. In England the state church, "The Church of England," was imposed upon all. Small radical groups not succumbing to the imposition of the state church met in tiny clandestine gatherings to practice their religious beliefs as their consciences dictated. As time progressed, these small iconoclastic sects braved the dangers of becoming more outspoken and public about their feelings as well as doings. Tremendous persecution followed these

smaller progressive religious sects. Perhaps the most notable of these were the Pilgrims and the Puritans.

Driven first to the Netherlands seeking refuge from persecution, these Pilgrims returned to England seeking royal permission to colonize America. The Virginia Company (Freidel, 1965) granted permission for this group of 102 men, women, and children to settle on their land. Since the Pilgrims missed Virginia and landed far north, the Mayflower Compact was signed in 1620 to serve as a charter for governing this micro-society.

Charles I came to the throne in 1625, and persecution of the Puritans increased dramatically. A group of influential clergy and merchants in eastern England combined their wealth and ingenuity to organize the Massachussetts Bay Company, which received a charter to colonize in 1629. John Winthrop was chosen governor in 1630 and sailed with nearly 1,000 colonists for America. The City of Boston was settled upon arrival.

Religious beliefs were quite contrasting between the Pilgrims and the Puritans. The Pilgrims were more tolerant of varying religious viewpoints, while the Puritans were extremely inflexible and intolerant of differing religious viewpoints. This seems a bit ironic that Puritans coming to America seeking religious freedom would be so intolerant of those whose only wish it was to obtain freedom from religious oppression. The Puritans wished to purify the Anglican church

from within rather than organize a completely new sect as the "Separatists" or the "Dissenters" would. It seems as if these two sets of religious immigrant groups influenced American reading instruction the most. Religious practices especially among the Puritans were methodically prescribed.

Perhaps it would be helpful at this juncture to point out the view of man which the Puritans held. Man's nature was held to be vile and evil. The mission of the church was to raise man from a fallen, carnal, and sensual state. This outlook on man's nature was consistently evidenced by laws, acts, and church edicts issued during early Puritan colonization. Such laws as the 1646 Act against Heresy, the 1697 Act against "Blasphemy and Atheism," and the 1656 Act against Non-Attendance were examples of such church-controlled edicts.

The church controlled nearly every aspect of Puritan colonial life. Infractions of the smallest nature brought with them exacting and almost unbelievable punishments. Were one to violate any of the acts mentioned above such punishments were meted out as follows: a fine of five shillings, standing on a block four inches high and wearing a breast placard delineating the offense committed, six months imprisonment, the pillory, the stockades with a rope around the neck, whipping, and boring the tongue with a hot iron. All of these punishments were exacted to raise man from his fallen state to the status of a true Christian.

The Puritan preachers exercised near unlimited power civilly as well as religiously. At one time the celebration of Christmas was outlawed because such was evidence of Popery. It was here in this very stern, austere colonial setting that American reading instruction had its birth.

The colonial schools and instructions held the identical philosophy on children's nature as was held on man's nature in general. Children had need to be beaten often to overcome their evil natures. These schools represented contemporary colonial society. An austere, stern-natured teacher beat knowledge into children in an environment of religious piety. Against this background one may begin to search out and understand American reading materials and instructional methodologies.

Due to insufficient industrial capabilities such as the printing press, early American reading instructional materials were imported from England. The Hornbook was the first piece of American reading instructional material. Charles Liggett, on a ledger record of cash paid out to his wife, recorded: "May 1678/for 1 horning book and paper - .8." (Smith, 1965). The ABC of England was read in America. However, the ABC never became popular for instructional purposes. The first recorded psalter was called the "New England Psalter" (Smith, 1965) and was published in 1760. Primers printed in America were the"Protestand Primer" (1685) and the New England Primer (1683). These primers

contained prose, poetry, crude pictures, oak covers, and scripture. Some spelling rules, the abc's, and easy syllables for children were also included in the New England Primer.

In the early 1700's a new speller was introduced, entitled "England's Perfect School-Master." Some later editions were Instructions for Right Spelling (1760) by George Fox, A New Guide to the English Tongue (1740) by Thomas Dilworth, The Universal Spelling Book by Finning, The Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue by William Perry, and The Child's New Plaything (1744) by an unknown author. Dilworth, Perry, and Fenning dominated the country's spelling instruction during the 1700's.

The Child's New Plaything, a speller, contained more secular entries such as stories, riddles, and dialogues than other spellers of the time. The vocabulary in the readers was controlled by a singular principal for selection--move from the simple to the complex--letters first, a list of one syllable words, lists of two and three syllable words, and so on up to six syllable words. No provisions for practice or repetition could be found in these readers; and the rate of words introduced varied from 20 to 100 words per page.

Methods of teaching reading were rarely described during the colonial period. However, Brinsley in 1612 suggested a new method of teaching the alphabet in his "Ludus Literarius."

Brinsley encouraged not only rote memorization of the alphabet forward and backward, but also required the child to point out a, b, c, d, or any other letter and its original position in the alphabet. This practice suggest by Brinley must have been generally accepted and practiced, as evidenced in the writings of Hoole (1912):

> The usual way to begin a child when he is first brought to Schoole is to teach him to know his letters in the Horn-book, where he is made to run over all the letters in the Alphabet or Christ-cross row both forwards and backwards, until he can tell any of them, which is pointed at, and that in the English character. . .

After achieving mastery of the alphabet, the student was introduced to the syllabarium. Hoole also commented on this facet of school:

> The common way to teach a child to spell, is, after he knows the letters in the Alphabet, to initiate him into those few syllables, which consist of one vowell before a consonant, as, ba, be, bi, bo, bu, etc., in the Horn Book, and thence to proceed with him little and little to the bottom of the book, hearing him twice or thrice over till he can say his lesson and then putting him to a new one.

Old-Time Schools and School Books written by Clifton Johnson (1904), affords an additional insight into spelling methods in a description of the so-called dame schools. During spinning and knitting, students would read and recite from their spelling primers. Hoole describes the methods used in the teaching of the primer:

> After they have got some knowledge of their letters and a smattering of some syllables and words in the horn book, to turn them into the ABC or Primer and therein to make them name the letters, and spell the words, till by often use they can pronounce (at least) the shortest words at first sight.

Following the primer, the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, the Ten Commandments, and other religious selections were to be memorized by the student. Hoole suggests that students would learn these religious materials more cheerfully if "also instructed at home to say them by heart" (1912).

Having mastered the primer, the student was graduated to the reading of the Bible. Many Biblical passages were memorized by students. Nila Baton Smith states:

> It is quite obvious that the subject matter of early reading instruction was a much more important consideration than was the method of teaching reading. Method was considered incidentally as a tool in furthering the fundamental aim of acquainting children with the content needed in their early religious life and equipping them to read the Bible in meeting the needs of their later religious life.
>
> The techniques used were those of learning the alphabet, spelling syllables and words, memorizing sections of content, and reading orally. All children were inducted into the reading process through the alphabetical method because that was the only reading approach known at that time.
>
> Memorization was perhaps a natural correlate of the religious materials used and the religious motive for teaching them. The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and other articles of faith were so important in the religious life of the early settlers that they deemed it necessary for all children to memorize them in their "green and tender years." The catechism, which made up the bulk of The New England Primer, was to be learned verbatim, so that when that eventful day arrived on which the child was catechized by the minister, he would deport himself commendably by answering every question unfalteringly and unerringly. As for the Bible, it was quite customary to memorize long passages of Scripture, so that they could be quoted with ease and fluency whenever the occasion called for them. (1965)

Oral reading was a family affair and a source of entertainment and recreation. The Bible was the only book in

most home libraries.

It should be pointed out that illiteracy abounded during this period, and a great dearth of reading materials existed. Due to this fact, the Bible was in many cases the only reading material commonly available and had thereby exerted tremendous religious influence upon the direction and nature of pre-Revolutionary American reading instruction.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to examine the pre-Revolutionary religious influences on American reading instruction.

Conclusions

After reviewing the historical evidence presented in this report, it would seem justifiable to conclude that the separation of religious influences from American reading instruction would be difficult, if not impossible. Religion not only influenced reading materials and methodology, but also served as the initial impetus for persons to learn to read. Historically speaking, religion has since the time of ancient Egypt to the present injected itself into reading materials as well as methodologies. Through ages of time, religion may have varied from polytheistic to nearly agnostic philosophies but has nevertheless exerted tremendous political pressure on educational systems. Even in our contemporary twentieth century American culture, religion is a force to be reckoned with. The election of 1980, a return to the conservative values, was immensely influenced by the so-called "Moral Majority" led by Dr. Jerry Fallwell, a Baptist Evangelist. Another husband and wife couple in Texas who censure newer

school textbooks for immoral and unpatriotic content exemplify this religious hold on reading materials and methods even till present day. Some may scoff at this and remark upon this "fad" of the 1980's; however, history indicates that religions influence on American reading education as well as American education in general has been and will continue to be an ominous force to be dealt with. Inasmuch as religion's influence upon reading education has been firmly established by historical fact, educators would be well advised to adapt to and cooperate with these forces as far as their personal convictions will allow.

Summary

In summary, religion's influence on education is not going to lessen in the future years of insecurity and instability, rather during times of turmoil societies turn to religion for security and direction. This writer predicts that religion's influence will enlarge over the coming decade and educators would do well to accept this fact.

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